Conference Call on Payir project - February 2010

Attendees:
From Payir: Senthil and Ram (from US)

Summary of Conference Call

Introduction to Payir:

The call started off with Senthil giving a brief overview of Payir. He explained that The Payir foundation was started by him with the goal of enabling social and economical well-being in the lives of the people from the Thennur area. Payir believes in holistic community growth as the basis for healthy co-existence. He went on to explain the various areas in which Payir has been working. He explained how the foundation has been successful in providing quality health care to the villagers and how they have benefited from it. Also, he highlighted work done to bring out leaders and work in tandem with the government and also the panchayat.

Senthil went on to explain the education aspect of payir - the aspect that is funded by Asha UFlorida. The educational programs at Payir are classified into Non-Formal Education center (NFE) and an Intervention program. The NFE takes in children from a very young age and try to mould them into leaders of the community. The intervention program on the other hand tries to improve the quality of the government schools in that area by providing training to teachers and also additional support staff.

Updates from project partner:

- Palani Ramu is a UFlorida volunteer who moved to India in Fall 2009. He has visited Payir 2-3 times over the past year and has provided valuable feedback on the functioning of Payir.
- Payir founder Senthil was invited to be a keynote speaker in a CII forum recently. This invited talk focused on how rural areas can be empowered to handle economic and social change. This invitation and talk were a high platform for Payir to get noticed and appreciated for their service to the community.
- Senthil also met with Dr. Kalam and shared his views about Payir.
- Payir has started distance education program wherein they have built a facility wherein volunteers from Chennai, Banglore, Trichy take online classes for the kids. 6-8th grade kids come to the after school program and attend distance-learning courses in English, Science Math etc. taught by volunteers in Chennai,
Bangalore and Trichy. The way in which this distance learning program works is that the students assemble at the Payir learning center at a predetermined time. At the same time volunteers who are interested in teaching basic math and sciences use information and Communication technologies like video conferencing to teach these students. Volunteers either teach from home or can go to centers setup in accessible places in the cities like the one in Mylapore in Chennai. This is a big success and the framework will be utilized to perform long distance medical consulting as well. As we observe the functioning of this system more volunteers can be solicited to contribute their time and teach varied courses.

- UNESCO has expressed interest to partner with Payir to set up a women teacher training center for the area.
- Payir has also started a temporary hostel for children whose parents migrate. One reason for dropouts and reduced attendance in the government schools has been that the parents migrate to different areas in search of employment opportunities. To avoid the children's education suffering from this migration, a hostel has been setup to accomodate these students and facilitate their continued education.
- They have also started an after school program wherein kids from 6th, 7th and 8th grade come to attend classes and learn from workshops.
- Senthil visited another Asha project Sri Vivekananda Youth Movement (SVYM) in the Mysore region in Southern India. This visit was facilitated through efforts by Asha UFlorida volunteers after Dr. Balu the founder of SVYM visited UFlorida in January 2010. SVYM also has a training center that trains youth to be successful community leaders and Senthil's visit will enable effective collaboration between these two projects.